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LETTERS

TO

THE HON. JOHN CARLING,

MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE.

ONTARIO, CANADA,

ON

EMIGRATION



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LETTER No. 1.

FERNHILL, ONTARIO, Jan 13, 1868.

The Hon. John Carling,

Sir:—

I believe that in addressing you as the Minister of Agriculture, I also address the Minister of Emigration for the Province of Ontario. If not, will you kindly transmit this letter to the proper quarter. In any case do me the kindness to read it, as it concerns a subject that has long interested me, and I intend calling upon you in a few days to learn the measure of your approval.

I believe the present system, or scheme, of Emigration in Canada to be, if not wholly wrong, sadly deficient in many respects, in two the most important—in short, the means of obtaining the desired result. Firstly, the bringing into the country of a good class of Emigrants. Secondly, keeping them here.

It is not my intention to question the policy of the Government in its present disposal of the Crown Lands; rather, I believe them, in the present existing state of affairs, judiciously held; for I am of the opinion that the most liberal grants and inducements which could be held out would only be defeated by the management—if as heretofore, of ~~officers~~ at the seaboard.

affairs

In what I shall have to say on this subject I wish you to understand that I am not merely theorizing, but speaking from purely practical experience, and that, at the same time, I do not wish to impugn the character or qualifications of any Government Officer in the Department of Emigration.

I have been for the past two years a Surgeon on board one or another of the Mail Steamships of the M. O. S. S. Co., and have during that time had to do, in my professional capacity and otherwise, with upwards of (at a rough estimate) ten thousand Emigrants to this country and the United States.

I am a Canadian myself, and the subject has always interested me. I have seen how emigration affairs are managed here and in England. I have heard the opinions of other men, capable from experience of judging the matter truthfully. I have been brought into close intimacy with the Emigrants themselves, have known their wants, their schemes, their hopes, and, I am sorry to say, too often their bitter disappointments, and the inevitable results which follow.

All this has gone to form the opinion I have expressed in the commencement of this letter.

It is my opinion that what this great Confederation now requires—all that it requires—is a great population, to be procured by promoting a wholesome emigration. This it is plainly the wish of the Government to bring about by holding large tracts of land at low prices, and employing Emigration Officers here and in England—but has it ever succeeded? It has not! The emigration to this country has always been slow and unsatisfactory, discouraging even, when compared with the great and constantly increasing influx into the United States. It has been attempted to explain this away by saying “the United States Government can give their Emigrants Prairie Lands, on which they

can at once commence with the plough, and from which they can in a short time secure a return for their labor and capital invested. But, to my mind, this explanation goes for nothing, and would go for nothing with the public were it put in a position to compare "Quebec" with "Castle Garden," the policy pursued at Ottawa with that at Washington, and the zeal of their respective officials on this side of the Atlantic and in England.

I give you my experience. Two-thirds of the Emigrants who embark at Liverpool, and disembark at Quebec, during the seven months of summer navigation up the St. Lawrence, go to the States. Of these two-thirds, one-half, or a third of the whole number, leave England with the intention of making the United States their destination, influenced thereto by having friends already in the country, and the inviting prospects held out to them by American Emigration Officers throughout the Kingdom. One-third remain in Canada, the remaining third, or half of those who ultimately go to the States, are lost to us by our inefficient system; and in losing these men we lose the best of them all—the very men we want most. They are, for the greater part, farmers, mechanics, tradesmen and skilled laborers, mostly men of small capital, who, finding their small means inadequate to support their large and growing families at home, come out to this country—anywhere out of England, but preferring Canada because a British Colony—to invest to the best advantage their small fortunes in lands for their children. I have found them respectable, sober, cleanly, and in many instances intelligent and well educated, ready and willing to undergo hardship, to work and wait, and hope for the best, but not prepared to overcome what they should have the least reason to expect, but which, unfortunately, they too often receive—discouragement from the moment of their arrival in the country, not actual and spoken, but, what seems to

me more galling and depressing to people in their condition—indifference, cold indifference, and cold official civility. Put yourself, my dear sir, in the position of these people for a moment, after a long and tedious voyage, during which they have only been upheld by looking forward hopefully to that promised “something better,” they land at Quebec. They are Emigrants and strangers. They have left behind everything that has ever been dear to them, or made their lives a pleasure. They are friendless and homeless, and are seeking their fortunes in a strange country, regarding which their ideas are necessarily vague and often incorrect. They are, to a great extent, dependent, and, in that state, impressionable and readily convinced. And from whom should they receive the helping hand and cheering voice, but from their natural and legitimate protectors and advisers?

Can you wonder that without them—that without the assistance of other than their own eyes—in their neglected condition, they fail to see in the mud of Point Levis and tumble-down houses of Quebec the country to which they have come to better their fortunes—the Promised Land—or that, sick and disheartened, they follow their friends of the voyage to Ohio or Iowa!

The evils resulting from this emigration *through* Canada cannot be over-estimated. Our young men, seeing it, take the alarm and follow in the same direction. Unsuccessful, of course many of them return, bringing back with them disaffection, Yankee vices and manners, which by this means are sown broadcast over the country, with what bad results is every day seen. But apart from all this—apart from the great public benefit to be derived from a good, healthy emigration—we are actually suffering at the present time from want of it. During the last month I have been travelling a good deal through the western part of Ontario, and everywhere it is the same complaint, “we want

men, farm hands, tradespeople and laborers ; we want servant girls and factory hands, and skilled laborers of all kinds." And they are wanted by thousands throughout the country. But the greatest want exists among the farmers. Not many years ago the farmers in Upper Canada could not afford to employ help on their farms. The land was new and only partially cleared, and the farmers were poor. Now it is different. The country is cleared, the farms large and well cultivated, and the farmers wealthy and anxious to employ labor, but it is not to be had. During the summer months—the busy season—help must be obtained by some means—large wages are offered—larger than the farmer can afford—and laborers flock out from the cities, only to be employed till the very earliest moment the farmer can do without them. Where I am writing (at the residence of my brother, a farmer,) I am told, on the best of authority, that in this Township alone, (Lobo,) a very small Township, employment might be obtained for upwards of three hundred men, at from \$80 to \$100 yearly, with board and lodging, a much higher rate of wages than any given to the agricultural laborer in England, and yet less than what the Canadian farmer has now to pay for a few months in the summer.

That our whole system is wrong, or there is gross mismanagement somewhere, results but too plainly show. But I am of the firm opinion that a plan is feasible whereby this emigration through the country might be stopped, the people who now slip through our fingers retained and provided for, and many thousands more annually induced to leave England for the Provinces. And to this end a change in the present principles of management, and a more vigorous action on the part of the Emigration Department, must necessarily tend.

I have the honor to be, Hon. Sir,

Your most obed't. serv't.,

JAMES LYNCH, M. D.

LETTER No. 2

*Liverpool March 1**The Hon. John Carling,**1868**Sir:—*

In a former letter I have remarked what, I think, must be patent to every one possessing a knowledge of Canadian affairs—"that the great want now existing in the Dominion of Canada is a population proportionate to its acres."

Are we to wait till, by simple and natural multiplication of our present population, aided only by the dribbling Emigration as now and for years taking place from this country, the requisite number of farmers, artisans and laborers are produced to clear and settle our wild lands, and supply the generally existing want of labor throughout the country? If so, why have an Emigration Department in the country at all? Why spend so many thousands of dollars annually in payment of officials? For, I believe, from what I have seen of the working of that department, and the benefit derived therefrom—and I beg to assure you my experience has not been limited—that a Crown Lands Agent in Quebec, and another in Montreal, would discharge all the useful duties of those offices under the present system, be of quite as much service, and be retained at a greatly less cost. I here beg leave to repeat what I have before mentioned:—that I do not wish to be understood as speaking disparagingly of the qualifications of any person or persons connected with those offices. On the contrary, I know many of them to be capable and worthy men; but, with no imposed or recognized line of duties, no apparent wish on the part of the Government to encourage zeal in

their work, they are left chiefly to their own resources, and to follow their own inclinations in transacting the business of their several departments, and results show their labors heretofore to have been unbeneficial.

Their want of success cannot, I think, be ascribed to idleness, but for want of a system, and a proper system, their energies have been misdirected, and their labors misspent. This is so is unfortunate, for it is certain that work might be provided for these offices, of such a nature as would give those gentlemen in charge a much better field for displaying their abilities in to some service than they have ever yet possessed, or the Government has ever encouraged them to find out of themselves, and such as would secure a more satisfactory result.

On this side of the Atlantic misdirection cannot be said to prevail, but total neglect. Here in Liverpool, scarcely second in importance to Quebec in relation to the interests of Canadian Emigration, there is not a single Agent, or person from whom information may be obtained by the intending Emigrant. There are Emigration Officials for the Australian Government, for New Zealand, for British Columbia, and for almost every new State in the Union, but for Canada, none! Of all the Westward Countries, and British Colonies, Canada alone remains unrepresented! I doubt if this be generally known, or, at least, whether those people who are in the habit of ascribing our meagre Emigration to so many other plausible and natural causes, know of it, or the important influence it exercises in frustrating our various endeavors to promote Emigration. It is scarcely necessary for me to say that a resident Emigration Officer here would be of incalculable service. Two or three years ago the authority which ruled this Department deemed it proper to appoint one to act for the then Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada. Last year he was removed, or the nature of the duties connected with his office so altered, as to

render it as it still remains—comparatively useless.

I am at a loss to understand why this, the only really sensible and good measure which has for many years been adopted in this department, should so soon have been abandoned. I cannot even surmise. If the present authority in these matters for the whole of the Provinces is in doubt about its having been a success, and on that account has not urged its reestablishment since Confederation, I beg, through you, to bear testimony in its favor. I trust, also, that my communications may be received as possessing the special recommendation of having been acquired through actual experience. I will state plainly what came under my own observation. During the summer 1866 and winter of 1866 and 1867, and following spring, a greater number of good Emigrants left this country (England, Ireland and Scotland) than during any previous or subsequent year, so far as my experience goes—more than this, they remained in Canada when they arrived there; and to my certain knowledge, from letters I have received from many of them since, the most of them are doing well at the present time, and likely to do better as they become a longer time resident in the country, and get over the first few years of hardship. What was the cause of this? There was not a larger general Emigration to the Provinces that year, nor a special demand for a particular kind of labor, nor were there any unusual inducements held out to a particular class. The Emigrants were, that year, as usual, of a mixed kind, as regarded occupation, age, nationality, &c., &c. They differed, however, in this essential character from the great majority of people who emigrate to Canada. They left this country with their ideas somewhat more correctly formed about the country. They were going to, and had been prepared, in a manner, to know what to expect—what obstacles they were likely to find in their way, and how best to overcome them—what were the peculiarities of climate,

soil, &c., to be met with, and the necessary provisions to be made for each. They were, chiefly, steady and respectable men, of a class that would seem most likely to prosper in a new country, and, at the same time, materially help a country to prosperity by their labor and industry. In short, they were picked men. A single Emigration Officer had been at work, and a good result was apparent at once. Mr. Dixon has himself told me that he was daily in receipt of between fifty and one hundred letters, from all parts of the Kingdom, from persons wishing to emigrate, asking for information concerning Canada—the price of land—the prices paid for labor—*when* to emigrate—how to proceed, first, on this side, and, again, on their arrival out; Letters from parties possessing small—and some, even, moderately large sums of money, and with a view to ultimate Emigration thither—asking for advice how best to employ it out there in the meantime! Where are these people to get their information now? I am not aware how much Mr. Dixon is now paid for allowing his name to appear in a paper published in Quebec, occasionally, called “The Canadian Emigration Gazette,” as Canadian Emigration Officer, Wolverhampton, but I do know, not sufficient to enable him to devote his whole attention to the matter, and, in consequence, he is obliged simply to refer all inquiries to the Steamship Offices in Liverpool.

It is desirable that our Emigrants should leave here on ships bound for the St. Lawrence, or Lower Province Ports—on Steamships bound for these places, if possible—as being cheaper and quicker, and better in various ways. But what is the case? From want of attention here, and from want of advice before setting out to come here, hundreds of Emigrants leave Liverpool for Canada, via New York.

Letting alone, then, the great services a resident Agent in Liverpool might render as a correspondent and adviser to intending Emigrants, some person is

actually required to look after, take care of, and advise those who have already commenced their journey, and come here to embark. Many of them unsophisticated people, they fall, immediately upon their arrival here, into the hands of their greatest enemies, the Agents of Passenger Brokers, who oftentimes, after swindling their victims of as much money as their credulity will allow, send them out to Canada via New York, New Orleans or Valparaiso. This is done frequently, and when you take into consideration that there are some six or seven steamers leaving weekly for New York, and only one for Quebec, and the plausible inducements offered to Emigrants on their arrival in the United States, you may readily conceive that great numbers are led off by this means, and how poor the chances are of many ever reaching Canada by that route.

Once more let me review, in as few words as possible, the defects of our Emigration System, and the co-existing abuses that have for so long been growing into it unchecked and overlooked. First, on this side of the Atlantic the people who are most likely to emigrate know nothing about us, our climate, our geography, our laws and government, or our religion. It is astonishing what erroneous opinions are entertained, and what ignorance prevails among all classes in this country concerning us. Most people know it to be a part of America, but whether a State of the Union, or merely a British Military Station, or a flourishing Dominion, not one in twenty of the whole population of Great Britain and Ireland can tell you. No effort is made to enlighten these people, or circulate reliable information among them, that would have a likely tendency to correct their erroneous impressions, or beget a desire to emigrate. No paper containing information of any service whatever to the intending Emigrant, (with the exception of the Canada Emigration Gazette, and it only at long intervals, and on application,) is allowed

to find its way among the people. Notwithstanding all this, numbers do annually leave for the Provinces, after possessing themselves, with difficulty, of some information absolutely necessary, such as regarding passage money, articles required on the voyage, &c. Set out upon their journey, they arrive here, or at London, or at some of the great embarking ports, where, friendless and unadvised, they are forced to run the gauntlet of all kinds of cheater and imposition. Embarked at last, they arrive at Quebec in due time, only to find themselves still worse advised and more friendless than at home, and in a strange country. By dint of persistent enquiry, and after submitting to frequent humiliations and disappointments, they fix, probably, upon some part of Western Canada for their destination. Sometimes they are allowed to proceed upon their journey with the special train which leaves Quebec on the arrival of the mail steamers, but quite as often they are obliged to wait twelve, sixteen and twenty-four hours, or until such time as the railway authorities see fit to send them. The remembrance of an instance of this kind occurs to me as I am writing, which will serve to illustrate to you the careless and almost studied indifference with which our Emigrants are treated after their arrival in the country. A year ago last June, I arrived at Quebec in the S.S. "Moravian" with upwards of 600 Emigrants, bound for different parts of Canada and the United States. This was on Sunday. On the following Wednesday, as I was proceeding to Toronto via the Grand Trunk Railway, our train overtook another at Cornwall, where we stopped for a few minutes. The other train I found to contain the Emigrants who had arrived at Quebec three days before, having in that time only accomplished about 250 miles, to many not a third of their journey; and amongst these passengers were women going out to join their husbands, many of them possessing little or no means, in a weakly and reduced state of health from

the long voyage, and having the care of large families of young children. Arrived at last at their destination, other hindrances are allowed to occur, as if purposely to delay and frustrate as much as possible the Emigrants' plans and intentions. For those who are obliged to remain for some length of time in Quebec to hear from friends or receive remittances, no decent provision is made. A large shed, dirty and without floor, or forms to sleep on, is the only accommodation, whilst neither the appearance or character of the cheap public houses in the ancient Capital is inviting or safe.

So at every stage in the Emigrant's journey, from the time he leaves his home in this country till he arrives at his destination, fresh obstacles are being continually placed in his way, unheeded and unopposed by those whose duty it is to remove them and open up a ready and easy road.

Look at this matter from whatever point you may, you will find, if you give yourself the trouble to inquire and look into it, that there is a wide, wide field for improvement; in fact, that a practice has yet to be adopted where a theory only now exists, and that its serious consideration demands your special attention, I am sure you will admit.

But, a word or two more. You may adopt measures in Canada to rectify evils there. You may commence a more liberal policy with the Crown Lands—you may give free passages and help to needy settlers—you may make better provision for the comfort and general convenience of Emigrants when they first land on our shores—you may publish, and advertise, and circulate information by every possible means. All or any of these, were they applied by a strong directing hand, would prove of immense benefit, but if engrafted on the old system, and unaccompanied by any influential measures on this side, would be unsuccessful in a great degree. For until these advantages be clearly shown to the classes in this country for whose benefit

they are prepared, and whom it is intended to influence thereby—until the knowledge of the existence of such plans becomes more general among them, and obtainable nearer home, and from a reliable source, all the endeavors you may make on that side, unsupported by personal representation on this, will end as all the feeble efforts hitherto made have ended, viz. :—in obliging the half-informed Emigrants to go to the Agents of the United States Government for further intelligence and instruction.

The Emigration Officers at Quebec are now sending copies of the last Canada Emigration Gazette, (which is as nearly as possible a repetition of all the previous issues,) with a map of the Eastern Townships, and enclosing a Circular from the Synod of the Diocese of Quebec to the Clergy of the Established Church in England and Ireland, asking them to use their influence in promoting Emigration from their several Parishes. This is a step in the right direction, but why not send a map of the whole of the Provinces? Why not give to the other Provinces—capable of providing for it—as fair a chance of increasing their population by these means as Quebec?

I do not wish, however, to urge any objections to this movement, as I am fully convinced it is certain to do good, and if a thorough reform is only to be accomplished by a little at a time, the oftener such measures are introduced, and such expedients adopted and pursued, if found successful, the sooner we may expect to derive some benefit from the administration of that hitherto imbecile institution—the Emigration Department.

I have the honor to be, Hon. Sir,

Your most obed't. serv't.,

JAMES LYNCH, M. D.